

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A method for preparing a spinal disc space, comprising:  
  
inserting a body portion of a distractor into the spinal disc space with an upper surface of the body portion adjacent an endplate of an upper vertebra and a lower surface of the body portion adjacent an endplate of a lower vertebra;  
  
advancing a cutting instrument over the body portion to remove material between at least one of the upper and lower surfaces of the body portion and the adjacent vertebra;  
  
and  
  
depositing cut material into a cavity formed in the body portion, the cavity opening toward at least one of the upper and lower surfaces.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the cavity opens at each of the upper and lower surfaces.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising advancing the cutting instrument over the body portion to remove material between the upper and lower surfaces of the body portion and each of the adjacent vertebra.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising depositing cut material into the cavity through each of the openings of the body portion.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein advancing the cutting instrument includes contacting a distal end of the body portion to limit advancement of the cutting instrument into the disc space.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein inserting the body portion includes contacting the endplate of the upper and lower vertebrae with the adjacent one of the upper and lower surfaces of the body portion.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
removing the cutting instrument and the body portion from the disc space; and  
inserting an implant in the spinal disc space.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the body portion includes at least one flange extending from a distal end of the body portion towards a proximal end of the body portion, and advancing the cutting instrument includes advancing the cutting instrument between the at least one flange and the body portion. :

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein advancing the cutting instrument includes navigating the cutting instrument with image guidance.

10. (Original) A method for facilitating preparation of a disc space between adjacent vertebrae, comprising:

providing a distractor insertable into the disc space, the distractor including a body portion extending between a leading end and a trailing end, the distractor further including at least one flange extending from the leading end towards the trailing end of the body portion, the at least one flange forming a slot along the body portion; and

providing a cutting instrument advanceable over the body portion and into the slot formed between the body portion and the at least one flange of the distractor.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein the cutting instrument is adapted to cut bony material from vertebral endplates adjacent the disc space to form an implant insertion location in the disc space.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11, wherein the body portion includes a cavity adapted to receive at least a portion of the cut bony material therein.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 11, further comprising providing an implant for insertion in the implant insertion location.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein:  
the distractor further includes a second flange opposite the at least one flange, the second flange extending from the leading end towards the trailing end of the body portion and forming a second slot along the body portion; and

the cutting instrument is advanceable over the body portion and into each of the slots formed between the body portion and the flanges of the distractor.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein the cutting instrument defines a channel sized to receive the body portion of the distractor when advanced thereover.

16. (Original) A method for preparing a spinal disc space, comprising:  
inserting a body portion of a distractor into the spinal disc space;  
advancing a cutting instrument over the body portion into the spinal disc space;  
and  
limiting advancement of the cutting instrument into the spinal disc space by contacting the cutting instrument with a distal end wall of the body portion.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein:  
the distal end wall includes a first width; and  
the cutting instrument includes an elongated shaft having a distal cutting end, the distal cutting end of the shaft configured to interfit with the body portion and includes a distally opening channel to receive the body portion of the distractor, the distal cutting end including a second width that is less than the first width.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein advancing the cutting instrument includes advancing the cutting instrument between a first flange and a second flange of the distractor, each of the first and second flanges extending from a distal end of the body portion toward a proximal end of the body portion, each of the first and second flanges forming a slot along the body portion for receiving the cutting instrument.

19. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein advancing the cutting instrument includes advancing the cutting instrument between at least one flange of the distractor and the body portion of the distractor, the at least one flange extending from a distal end of the body portion towards a proximal end of the body portion and forming a slot along the body portion for receiving the cutting instrument.

20. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
removing the cutting instrument and the body portion from the disc space; and  
inserting an implant in the spinal disc space.

21. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein inserting the body portion includes contacting endplates of vertebrae adjacent the spinal disc space with an adjacent one of an upper surface and a lower surface of the body portion.

Claims 22-29 (Cancelled)